

THE CORRESPONDENT.

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT.

EDITED BY GEORGE HOUSTON.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

WATSON REFUTED.

LETTER III.

I am ready to grant that several of Mr. Paine's objections are not valid, and often trifling; but I declare, once for all, that I do not think myself bound to follow Mr. Paine in every instance. I shall direct my remarks, rather to disprove your reasoning, than to defend every objection of your opponent; at the same time, I shall avoid repeating what he has advanced, and you have not disproved. The chief proofs against the genuineness of the Pentateuch have been overlooked by Mr. Paine. I shall state them briefly.

First. It was believed, by all the best informed old fathers of the church, that the Jewish books had been absolutely lost during the captivity, and that Esdras had written them from inspiration; or, that he collected the Pentateuch, and all other canonical books, out of whatever records he could find, and put them together.* In either case, their authority is greatly invalidated; and the more so, as the fourth book of Esdras, adopted by the Greek church, and generally deemed authentic, says expressly, that Esdras dictated the holy books during forty successive days and nights, to five scribes, who were continually writing. This tale shews sufficiently the general belief that he was the restorer of the long lost books of the law. In our second book of Nehemiah, or, properly speaking, Esdras, it is said, that Ezra, or Esdras the scribe, who was above all the people, brought the book^s of the law to the people, and then the people rejoiced much in being instructed in the law of God, that when they found there the commandment of the Lord ordering the Jews to perform the feast of the booths, there was great gladness, "and all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity, made booths, and sat under booths: for, since the

* Porro Esdras sancti patres docent instauratorem suisse sacrarum librorum, quod non ita intelligendum est, quasi scripturæ sacræ omnes perierint in eversione civitatis, et templi Nabuchodonosor, et ab Esdra divinitas inspirato reparatæ fuerint, ut fabulatur auctor, L. IV. Esdræ C. XIV. Sed quod Scripturas Mosis, et prophetarum in varia volumina descriptas, et in varia loca dispersas, et tempore captivitatis non diligenter conservatas, Esdras summa diligentia collectas ordinaverit, et in unum quasi corpus redigerit. Bellarmin de Script. Ecclesiast. page 22.

days of Joshua the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so." If the Jews had even forgotten a feast, the memory of which, every father would transmit to his son, is this not an evident proof that they had no books in the captivity?

Again, in chap. vii. of the 1st book of Esdras, it is said, that Esdras "had very great skill, so that he omitted nothing of the law and commandments of the Lord, but taught all Israel the ordinances and judgments." Can any man, after this, doubt that Esdras is the compiler of all the books which the Jews had not known for many centuries? And are we, who laugh at the Catholic councils, to trust to the word of a Jewish Scribe? It is further stated in 2 Chronicles, chap. xxiv. v. 15, that Hilkiab the priest found a book of the law of God, *given* by Moses, and sent it by Saphan to king Josias, who heard it read, which shews that it must have been very short; and, by the context, it would appear to have been the law strictly speaking. Another proof that these records were altogether scattered, and are all without authority, since it was so easy to forge them among a people who seemed to preserve no more than a traditional law. Again, although, in the older Jewish books, such as Kings and Chronicles, we find the name of Moses often mentioned, yet no word answering to the five books of Pentateuch is to be found. The code of laws of Moses seems to have been forgotten; for Solomon ornamented the Temple with calves, in express contempt of that law, and this while he was the favorite of God, and the wisest man in the world. The very confusion that pervades the books ascribed to Moses, shews them to be compilations. Jerome, who was one of the most learned of the fathers, confesses that he dares not affirm that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch: he even adds, that he has no objection to allow that Esdras wrote the books in question.*

Secondly. We know that no canon of books ever existed among the Jews till the time of the synagogue under the Maccabees. Before their reign, there had never existed among the Jews any such council: and, if the word occurs in the Pentateuch, it is a fault of the transcribers and composers, who lived when there was a synagogue. and is not to be understood in any other acceptation than a collection of priests. The Pharisees of the second temple chose the books they thought best among a multitude of forgeries. The Talmud relates, that this synagogue were about to reject the Book of Proverbs, Ezekiel's prophecies, and Ecclesiastes, because they imagined these writings contradictory to the law of God; but a certain Rabbin having undertaken to reconcile them, they were preserved as canonical. A prodigious number of forged Books of Daniel, Esdras, and of the Prophets, were then in circulation; and to distinguish the genuine from the false works became absolutely necessary. This doubt and uncertainty conspires to render the decision of the synagogue very doubtful; particularly, as we shall shew in the sequel, that many passages of the Prophecies are written evidently about the time of this choice of sacred books, and in-

* Sive Mosen dicere volueris auctorem Pentateuchi, sive Esdram ejusdem instauratorem operis, non recuso. Hieronim. Op. Tom. IV- p. 134. Apud Edit. Paris 1706.

serted in them, probably, by some cunning priest, as the oracles of Sibil were forged to suit Cæsar.

Thirdly. The similarity of the mysteries of the Jews to those of the Babylonians, is too glaring not to let us see the origin of Genesis in particular. The creation in six days is a perfect copy of the Gahans, or Gahan-bars, of Zoroaster; the particulars of each day work are literally the same. The serpent was famous among the Babylonians. The mythological deluge of Ogyges and Xissuthrus, are symbols of changes arising on earth, as they imagined, from the revolutions of the heavenly bodies. These, a little ornamented by the historical narration of Deucalion's inundation, related by Berosus, is the pattern of Noah's flood; the ark of Osiris and emblematical dove and raven were Egyptian hieroglyphics. The man and the woman in Paradise is a mere copy of Zoroaster's first pair. The original sin is Pandora's box. The Talmud of Jerusalem says expressly, that the Jews borrowed the names of the angels, and even of their months, from the Babylonians. The Elohim, or Gods, (not God,) are said, in Genesis, to have created the world. It was not Jehovah, but the genii, or gods, that are in Hebrew called makers of the world. And these are the very genii, who, according to Sanchoniatho, were by Mercury excited against Saturn.

Fourthly. We ask in what language was the Pentateuch written, if it really was the work of Moses? It is known that Hebrew is a dialect of the Phenician, and that the Jews spoke Egyptian for a very long time before they adopted the language of the people among whom they dwelt. In Psalm lxxxi. we learn that the Jews were surprised to hear the language of the people beyond the Red Sea. If, therefore, Moses, or any person of that age, is the author of the Pentateuch, it is evident that the Hebrew books are mere translations. What degree of credit does a nation deserve, who have been able to take for originals, books that were in the face of them translations? Is it right to persecute them, as priests have done, while they had power, for refusing to give credit to this tissue of contradictory and absurd fables?

Fifthly. In the books of the Old Testament, we find abundant proofs that they have been written in an age greatly posterior to that of Moses. In Genesis, chap. xii. ver. 6, we find these words, "And the Canaanite was then in the land." This implies another period when the Canaanite was not in the land, which we learn from the Bible did not happen till after David, and could not therefore be written by Moses. The beginning of Deuteronomy is certainly not written by him; for he never passed the Jordan; he died upon Mount Nebo, to the eastward of it. The English translation has in chap. i. ver. 5, of this book, said, "on *this* side of the Jordan," for "on *that* side," which is in the original. The translator has taken similar liberties very often. In chap. xxxiii. we find this expression, "There never was in Judea so great a prophet as Moses;" and such could be pointed out in many places. Here needs no comment to shew that such passages could only be written in a posterior age, and when there had been several prophets after Moses. Thomas Paine mentions many other passages, which I shall consider when I come to your next letter.

The above considerations would be sufficient to invalidate the gen-

uineness and authenticity of any historical book : but here we find that the credulity of bigots requires less proof for the authority of a work, which, according to them, is the fountain of faith, than for Ossian's poems, or any other book of no consequence. If a common historical work contains fables, impossible events, and anachronisms ; if its age is not ascertained ; if we are certain that it was unknown for many centuries ; if we are even ignorant whether it is an original or a translation, who would give the slightest credit to such a book ? Yet are enlightened nations led by the testimony of the Jews, a people credulous beyond measure, extremely ignorant, almost continually in slavery, and dispersed. This is the nation that pretends to give an account of the creation, and, with a vanity peculiar to an insignificant people, to assume the supremacy among nations, and arrogate to themselves the exclusive protection of Jehovah, and dare make their Adam the common stock of mankind. You allow, my Lord, that several passages have been interpolated in the Pentateuch. No person in the least acquainted with the history can deny that it has suffered great alterations ;* and I have already noticed the opinion of the best informed fathers of the church upon the non-existence of the Pentateuch, several centuries prior to Esdras. I now beg to be informed, how we are to decide, if Hilkiah, in the reign of Josias, collected from tradition, or some old book he found in a chest, the precepts of the law ? and whether the other famous scribe, Esdras, did not compile from heresay, and some imperfect and scattered manuscripts of no authority, together with a great many Babylonish traditions, those venerable five books of Moses ?—We are informed, in one of the books that bears his name, that Esdras was the wisest of his cotemporaries, and therefore a fit and probable person to write books out of old legends.

If the books of the Old Testament were composed at so late a period, no wonder then that we find all the mysterious part of them so much like the religion of the ancients, and particularly of the Babylonians, and the historical part made up of heterogenous matters, which in our days, unassisted by any profane writer of that age, we can make nothing of. I shall mention a few of the most striking points of resemblance between the Jewish and other mysteries. Abraham, the most famous of their patriarchs, has ever been celebrated in India. This they seem to have brought from their native country, Arabia. We have already noticed, that their account of the creation is exactly copied from Zoroaster, who says, that the world was made in six periods of time, called by him the thousands of God and of light, meaning the six summer months ; in the first, God made the heavens ; in the second the waters ; in the third, the earth ; in the fourth, trees ; in the fifth, animals ; and in the sixth man. The Etrurians and the Hindoos have very similar traditions of the highest antiquity, which, though they were emblems at first perfectly understood, astronomers afterwards converted them into periods, comprehending as many years as was required for different revolutions of the planetary system.

* Multa in Hebræis et Græcis codicibus vitia esse ostendimus. Multa mendacia in rebus minutis, eorum pars aliqua non exigua nostra editione vulgata extat.—Maran. pr. edit. vulg. cap. 21.

Thus, while the Hindoos and Persians called the days or ages of the world, each of many thousands of years; the Jews, ignorant of astronomy, and fond of the marvellous, comprised all within six common days. Their firmament, or heaven of chrystial, and its windows, are absurdities not peculiar to them; the feast of the Pascha, which signifies passage, is of Egyptian origin, and was in reverence for the passage of the sun, at the vernal equinox: the sacrifices of calves or oxen, the ceremony of the scape-goat, are Egyptian and Indian; the latter, in particular, have a ceremony altogether the same with that of the scape-goat. It is too long to insert here, but I refer my readers to Mr. Halhed's introduction to the code of Gentoo laws for information on this head. The distinction between pure and impure animals, was first made by the Egyptians; the ladder seen in Jacob's vision, is exactly a copy of that with seven steps in the cave of Mithra, representing the seven spheres of the planets, by means of which souls ascended and descended. It is also the mythology of the Hindoos, whose antiquity no man at the present day can venture to deny. The seven candlesticks, and the twelve stones are Egyptian, and were emblems of the seven planets, and twelve signs of the Zodiac. The serpent is the most famous Egyptian hieroglyphic; it signifies eternity, or the sum of all things. The fasts before feasts are also derived from this nation. The Jewish high-priest, like the Egyptian, wore an image of sapphire, being the emblematic picture of truth, upon his breast: in short, the Egyptians, their masters, gave them the first ideas of mysteries, which, in the course of time, they mingled with the Chaldaic; and Manetho informs us, in the extract given by Josephus, in his first book against Appian, that in authors of great authority, he found the Jews to have been distinguished in Egypt by the name of captive pastors, which Josephus artfully enough has attempted to convert into captive kings. These are the men whom sacred historians pretend to have taught the Egyptians all their arts. These wretches, despised of all nations, were themselves the emphatical admirers of the wisdom the East. Their legislator was an Egyptian priest, and learned all that he knew from them; and you would persuade us that a set of Arabian hordes had founded the Egyptian empire, simply because they, like the Irish, are pleased to say that they were antediluvians. I pardon the Jews for their credulity: but Europeans in the eighteenth century, ought not to think as the inhabitants of Palestine. If we give credit to all the reports of the origin of nations, we may give up all pretensions to common sense.

The immortality of the soul is shewn, by the learned, but superstitious Warburton, never to have been mentioned in the Pentateuch; nor the notion of hell, or of future rewards and punishments. There is nothing more certain, however, than that the Pharisees, long before Christ, strenuously maintained the immortality of the soul, and in some measure adopted the doctrine of transmigration of souls, which they had got from the Greeks and other nations.

The Sadducees, founding themselves upon the Bible, fervently denied a future life. The Essenians, according to Philostratus, were Pythagoreans, both in their morals, belief, and mode of life, except that a few of the Jewish articles of faith, such as the necessity of circum-

cision, were mingled with their creed. Josephus himself acknowledges the similarity between the Essenians and the Plisti among the Thracians, to whom Zamolxis, the disciple of Pythagoras, taught his doctrines. The Therapeutes, the pattern and origin of Christian morals, were reckoned amongst the Jews to be the most holy among the Essenians. They sacrificed their passions to God; they never swore, but made simple affirmations; they lived, as it were, in convents; they despised bodily pain: when they entered their state of perfection, they abandoned their property, wives, children, and all earthly concerns; they lived upon bread, water and salt; and spent the six days of the week in interpreting the allegorical sense of the Bible. They revered the Sabbath with a most scrupulous exactness; then they assembled in places set apart for religion, the men ranged on one side, and the women on the other, separated by a division four feet high, to prevent temptation. Then they sung praises to God, and preached; they obeyed all the laws of their country, but never would execute any order to hurt another person. They, like the Pythagoreans, thought themselves possessed of the gift of prophecy; they, like the Pythagoreans, believed in the great year, whence arose the famous millennium of the Christians.

The three sects of Jews—Pharisees, Sadduces, and Essenians, lived all in perfect harmony; the incredulous Sadduces not being considered as heretics, but often attaining the dignity of high-priests. This suffices to shew, that the Jews borrowed from other nations those very mysteries which the ignorance of writers has misled mankind to consider as the special revelations of Jesus Christ.

I have insisted so much upon this circumstance, because there is not a single article of Christian morals, nor one religious tenet, contained in the New Testament, that was not known before Jesus Christ was born. And the Christian religion, like that of the Jews, is a corruption of the mythologies of the nations they brand with the name of infidels.

I return to your book. It is now needless to answer your logical inference, that if Esdras is the compiler of the books of the Pentateuch, they may still be true. I have already said, that we are not to sacrifice our reason to the compilations or works of a Jewish scribe, who borrowed evidently so much, and who pretended to divine inspiration and conversations with the angels. When I began to read your book, I was impressed with the idea of your candour; sorry am I to see the malevolence with which you treat Mr. Paine, and how much you misrepresent his just aspersions on the conduct of Moses. Your language almost persuades me that you do not differ from the gentlemen of your profession. Could Moses affirm, as you pretend he might, that he never persecuted any man? What! that monster, who, although married with a Midianite, ordered thousands of his credulous followers to be murdered, because one of them had slept with a Midianite, whom Josephus states was his wife! What! when his brother and codjutor makes a golden calf to the people, this impostor, instead of punishing him, orders 3,000 men to be murdered, and appoints Aaron his successor! Because Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, could not suffer to see him usurping all the power, he murders them, although Korah was the descendant of Levi. This is Moses, who says, like Bishop Watson, that he

"was a very meek man!" Were these continual murders necessary to instruct ignorant idolaters who followed the example of their priests? Have not the founders of our faith been the most cruel murderers? But all this we are told was the immediate orders of the Lord Jehovah, a merciful God. How feeble appears the power of this great God! He is continually repenting, and always obliged to renew his covenants with a set of wretches, who, although they enjoyed his special protection, always forsook him, and only fulfilled his commands strictly when they were ordered to massacre. They might have been the favorite people of God, but I am sure they were the disgrace of men. You talk of idolatrous nations sunk in vice. I know of none so barbarous as the Jews, whose legislator was obliged to fly from Egypt for murder, a perfect assassin. The laws concerning paternal power, which you support, are horrid. Their having been adopted by many nations, is a proof of the general prevalence of superstition, ignorance and despotism. I have nothing to answer to your discourses on tythes. The Bible is preached up, because it teaches passive obedience, donations to the church, and such other acts of *public utility*. see p 129

PROPHECIES AND TYPES.

MR. EDITOR—Prophecies and miracles have been the chief pillars of the Christian church: the two corner stones of superstition and of folly; and whatever an amiable reformer may have attempted by making them the motives of virtue, experience tells us they have been converted into tools of the most boundless ambition. It is the pretended divinity of the Christian religion which has done all the mischief. People have looked on this system as the work of a divine Creator, whose goodness they supposed was boundless, whose wisdom was most perfect; and, under this belief, they have been cruelly imposed on. With respect to those parts of the Old Testament which are said to tell the coming of Christ, they are perhaps the most obscure parts in it; and the metaphoric and unintelligible language in which they are expressed, is one great reason why an impartial reader cannot believe in them. Happily for mankind, they have nothing to do with morality: the language it speaks is plain and easy, and cannot be misconstrued nor misunderstood.

If the prophets of the Hebrews had been able to foretell future events, and wished themselves understood, why did they not express themselves in intelligible language? A prophecy should be a clear, exact and certain prediction of something that will come to pass. What would have been more easy for them than to have written down these few lines?—"Israel has no king, but a teacher to expect. This teacher will be the son of a carpenter, and born at Bethlehem, under Herod. He will prove his mission by the power of miracles, and will be sacrificed for the truth of his religion under Tiberius." This would have been miraculous enough; but would have had more the form of a prophecy than all their farrago of figurative nonsense put together. There is nothing to be found in the old prophecies which has the least relation to Christ; they neither speak of his person, his sufferings, nor his office in

this world, so as to convey an idea that Jesus is the person alluded to. Nor is it, by picking up, here and there, a few scraps of lines of equivocal sense, which theologians have done, and calling them prophecies, that can convince a reasonable person they are so.

To shew how far the spirit and rage of every thing in the bible, and of applying it to Christ or the church has been carried, it will be necessary to take a view of that book, called Solomon's Songs.—It is very well known, that this wise and amorous king, forsaking the excellent lessons which his father David gave him before his death, (1 Kings, chap. ii,) kept a seraglio: "he had seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, and his songs were a thousand and five," (1 Kings chap. xi. v. 3—chap. iv. v. 32.) These songs; at least those which go under his name—appear to be a collection of amorous verses, written between him and some of his mistresses. How the priests could take it into their heads to find any comparison between Solomon and his mistress, and Christ and his Church, is difficult to say. We are informed in the songs, and it shews the dissoluteness of Solomon's manners, that "king Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom of gold, the covering of purple; *the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem,*" (Solomon's Song, chap. iii, ver. 10;) and most probably to some of those daughters of Jerusalem these sonnets were addressed. It is unnecessary to quote any of the ridiculous and wanton passages with which this book abounds; but whoever made the comparisons there laid down, seem not to have been aware of the consequence. There is certainly not the least resemblance between the chastity of Christ and the adulterous and fornicating wantonness of Solomon. As to the Church's being like one of the *prostituted daughters of Jerusalem*, that is best known to those who have prostituted her. Since the prophecies are so very equivocal in the Old Testament, and as some lines in that collection may be made to apply to almost any thing, it may be necessary to call a view over the New Testament, and see whether any of the prophecies contained in it be more clearly expressed.

Of all the prophecies in the gospels, perhaps that of the re-appearance of Christ is the least obscure; and as it was foretold by Christ himself, the supposed Messiah, and the greatest of the prophets, it might have been expected to come to pass; and so his disciples seem to have expected. It is recorded by three of the apostles, that when Jesus had foretold the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, some of his disciples asked him, what should be the sign of his coming again on the earth, and the end of the world. Jesus, after giving an account of the wars and other afflictions which were to precede them, and which are mentioned in the book of Daniel, thus continues: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, and he shall send his angels with a great sound

of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree : when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh ; so, likewise, ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*"—Matt. xxiv, 29, 30, &c. Mark. xiii, 24, 25, &c. Luke xxi, 27, &c.

What words can express more clearly the coming of Christ a second time, and the end of the world ? They were to happen during that generation, from the express words of Christ, and eighteen centuries are now elapsed without their having been fulfilled. Thus the most extraordinary prediction to be found in all the scriptures never came to pass, which proves how very little any of them are to be depended on.

With respect to the miracles which are said to have attended Christ, such as the miraculous conception, his being born of a virgin, and his being taken up in a cloud, and all such kind of fabulous and childish nonsense, they are only the echoes of antiquity, which priestcraft has made use of to deceive mankind. The Egyptians, and other ancient people, had an opinion, that the gods were accustomed to have carnal intercourse with the fair daughters of the earth, and consequently, many celebrated characters were supposed of divine origin. Plutarch informs us, that Romulus was said to be of divine race, and that he was afterwards taken into heaven, and had divine honors paid him. Others were born of virgins and goddesses. Others were inspired (such as Zaleucus, Minos and Zoroaster) by the divine spirit. Prophecies and miracles are not peculiar to christianity ; they have been the constant attendants of every religion. The person who pretends to be favoured by deity, must have something to show at his mission ; at least to make people believe so ; thence the curing of the lame and blind, the raising of the dead, and a pretended insight into futurity. These two false luminaries, however, appear now to be in their wane. The prophets and the miracle workers seem to be travelling the same road as the witches and wizards of old ; they will all of them ere long vanish, and it is to be hoped, like Shakespear's fabric of a vision, of which slight materials they have been composed, leave not a wreck behind them.

OBSERVATOR.

NEW-YORK, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1828.

REMOVAL.

The Office of the CORRESPONDENT is removed from 422 Broadway, to No. 6 William Street, nearly opposite Beaver Street.

Education.—It appears from the foreign journals that great efforts are making in Europe to extend the benefits of instruction among the inhabitants of that quarter of our globe ; not *that* instruction hitherto pursued in the schools, which has only tended to debase the human

mind, but a course of education calculated to convey correct ideas of actual existences, to make man acquainted with himself, and with the numerous objects by which he is surrounded, instead of paralyzing his faculties by senseless reveries, beneficial to those only who profit by their promulgation. In Great Britain in particular, the education of *infants*, appears to occupy general attention, and to have been attended with the most beneficial results. In the *Co-operative Magazine*, for March last, the first report of "The West of England Infant School Society," (of which the Duke of Bedford is President) is noticed; by which it appears that this benevolent institution is founded on liberal and beneficent principles; its first rule being, "That the Society shall embrace persons of *all* religious denominations." The bible is, no doubt, one of the books which custom has sanctioned to be read in these infant schools; but no creed or particular catechism is introduced, and "no interference is allowed in any manner whatever with religious opinions."

At the time this report was drawn up, (June 1827,) one school had been formed in Exeter, consisting of 130 children; and these little beings, from the age of two years, were manifesting the benefits of the system, in the kindness with which they regarded each other, the cheerfulness visible in their countenances, and the intelligence of their remarks. Speaking of the treatment of the children, the Committee state, "that in this school the rod is thrown away. The children are governed by sympathy and love. The master and mistress, by their kind and affectionate conduct, first acquired an influence over a few of the children; and by properly directing the sympathies of the others, very shortly obtained an absolute sway over the hearts and affections of the whole school. The little *imitative* beings have an example of kindness, benevolence, and good humour perpetually before them; the *best feelings* of their minds are constantly exercised and improved: and the whole assembly exhibits a scene of the most *perfect happiness*, of which no adequate idea can be formed without a personal inspection, and which excites the astonishment and delight of every benevolent individual who visits the school."

What a contrast does this report present to the picture exhibited in the schools recently established for the education of infants in this city. Here, instead of their affections being gained by kindness, and by properly directing their sympathies, they are told that they are the children of the devil, and are operated upon by the *terrors* of an *angry* God.—These are the topics to which their young minds are constantly directed; and a strict attention to them is enforced by every thing the reverse of good humour. Can it then be a matter of surprise, under such tuition, that our children should evince those irascible feelings which we see every where displayed in families, and manifest that selfishness so characteristic of illiberality, and to which may be traced all the crimes that disturb society?

We shall resume this interesting subject in our next.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Calvinistic Divinity.—What strange ideas, says Ramsay, would an Indian or a Chinese philosopher have of our holy religion, if they judged by the schemes given of it by our modern free-thinkers, and Pharisaical doctors of all sects? According to the odious and too vulgar systems of these incredulous scoffers, and credulous scribblers, the God of the Jews is a most cruel, unjust, partial, and fantastical being. He created 6000 years ago a man and a woman, and placed them in a fine garden in Asia, of which there are no remains. This garden was furnished with all sorts of trees, fountains, and flowers. He allowed them the use of all the fruits of this beautiful garden except of one, that was planted in the midst thereof, and that had in it a secret virtue of preserving them in continual health, and vigour of body and mind, of exalting their natural powers, and making them wise. The devil entered into the body of a serpent, and solicited the first woman to eat of this forbidden fruit; she engaged her husband to do the same. To punish this slight curiosity and natural desire of life and knowledge, God not only threw our first parents out of Paradise, but he condemned all their posterity to temporal misery, and the greatest part of them to eternal pains, though the souls of these innocent children have no more relation to that of Adam than to those of Nero and Mahomet; since, according to the scholastic drivellers, fabulists, and mythologists, all souls are created pure, and infused immediately into mortal bodies as soon as the fœtus is formed. To accomplish the barbarous partial decree of predestination and reprobation, God abandoned all nations to darkness, idolatry, and superstition, without saving knowledge or salutary graces; unless it was one particular nation, whom he chose as his peculiar people. This chosen nation was, however, the most stupid, ungrateful, rebellious, and perfidious of all nations. After God had thus kept the far greater part of all the human species, during near 4000 years, in a reprobate state, he changed all of a sudden, and took a fancy for other nations beside the Jews. Then he sent his only begotten son to the world, under a human form, to appease his wrath, satisfy his vindictive justice, and die for the pardon of sin. Very few nations, however have, heard of this gospel; and all the rest, though left in invincible ignorance, are damned without exception or any possibility of remission. The greatest part of those who have heard of it, have changed only some speculative notions about God, and some external forms in worship: for in all other respects, the bulk of Christians have continued as corrupt as the rest of mankind in their morals: yea, so much the more perverse and criminal as their lights were greater. Unless it be a very small select number, all other Christians, like the Pagans, will be forever damned; the great sacrifice offered up for them will become void and of no effect; God will take delight forever in their torments and blasphemies; and though he can, by one fiat, change their hearts, yet they will remain forever unconverted and unconvertible, because he will be forever unappeased and

irreconcilable. It is true, that all this makes God odious : a hater of souls, rather than a lover of them ; a cruel, vindictive tyrant, an impotent or a wrathful demon, rather than an all-powerful, beneficent father of spirits ; yet all this is a mystery. He has secret reasons for his conduct that are impenetrable ; and though he appears unjust and barbarous, yet we must believe the contrary, because what is injustice, crime, cruelty, and the blackest malice in us, is in him justice, mercy, and sovereign goodness. Thus the incredulous free-thinkers, the Judaizing Christians, and the fatalistic doctors, have disfigured and dishonoured the sublime mysteries of our holy faith ; thus they have confounded the nature of good and evil, transformed the most monstrous passions into divine attributes, and surpassed the Pagans in blasphemy, by ascribing to the Eternal Nature, as perfections, what makes the most horrid crimes amongst men. The grosser Pagans contented themselves with divinizing lust, incest, and adultery ; but the predestinarian doctors have divinized cruelty, wrath, fury, vengeance, and all the blackest vices.

Prejudice.—So strong a hold has the delusive theories of theologians taken of the human mind, so firmly rooted are the prejudices arising from early impressions and instruction, so much influence have the priests, still over the most learned ; coupling and interweaving as they do truth with falsehood ; and as much do the learned still stand in awe of power ; which at present supports the priests and their leading dogmas, that hitherto the liberals have not had fair play ; and though the properties and powers of nature have been ably explained and manfully supported, and the delusions of the priests have been ably and courageously exposed, still the advocates of nature and truth have an arduous task to perform ; but the age of delusion, cant and hypocrisy is in the wane, and when the present deceptions are thoroughly exposed, and grow stale, when they become (as ere long they will be) as ridiculous as the heathen mythology has become, and as Milton's *Paradise Lost* helps to render them, (which is nothing more than a sublime satirical poem,) I say, when the present religious delusions once become as ridiculous as those which have gone before them, and are now exploded, we may defy the knaves of the world to get up any other burlesque about divinities to bewilder, confuse, and distract mankind. Philosophy, science, and the immortal press, will defeat all attempts again to hold in bondage the human mind by the threats of a wrathful, hot, and consuming God, or a tormenting and relentless devil. And instead of alarming mankind with threats of everlasting vengeance, will lead them to the exercise of the moral and benevolent feelings of their nature, and to the conquering of all their grosser, vindictive, and sordid passions.

Why should the Free-thinker be immoral more than the Religionist ? It is his interest to be moral, as much as it is that of any other man.—He has every inducement to be a moral man, without any of the frantic and enthusiastic incentives of religion, to hurry him into immorality, The free thinker is opposed to delusion, to error, to falsehood, only because they are fatal to the interests, fatal to the happiness of society, and

at war with the welfare of mankind. The Free-thinker has a code, by which he conforms himself, founded upon facts, built upon experience, guided by reason. He walks through the Garden of Nature, converting only the wholesome and delicious fruits to his use; experience teaches him to refuse, to cast aside the noxious and poisonous plants. To receive nourishment, to feel pleasure, and to communicate these to others, is the moving principle of the Free-thinker. Thus he becomes serviceable to his fellow creatures, his whole life is taken up in making those around him happy, that he may enjoy happiness himself; that his acquaintance may feel interested in his welfare, may smile upon his prosperity, may share his felicity. He fears no revenging and implacable phantoms of superstition: he worships no unknown powers; he seeks for no laws out of the world which he inhabits; he asks not for a rule of action from the arch Priest, from the insane devotee, or the morose bigot; his whole conduct is squared—not by any fanciful theory—not by any chimerical system—but by the duties of morality: these, unlike the various contradictory chimeras of the religionist, remain the same; founded upon truth, they are eternal.

St. Swithin.—Tithes were established in England through St. Swithin, who prevailed on Ethelwolf to enact a law, by which he gave the tenth of the land to the church, on condition that the king should have a prayer said for his soul every Wednesday in all the churches forever. Ethelwolf solemnized the grant by laying the charter on the altar of St. Peter at Rome, in a pilgrimage he made to that city, and by procuring the pope to confirm it.

St Swithin died on the second of July, 862, in the reign of king Ethelbert, and he was buried, according to his own order, in the churchyard. Alban Butler, from whom these particulars are related, affirms the translation of his relics into the church an hundred years afterwards, and refers to the monkish historians for the relation of “such a number of miraculous cures of all kinds wrought by them, as was never known in any other place.

Among the notable miracles alleged to have been worked by St. Swithin, is this; that after he had built the bridge at Winchester, a woman came over it with a lap full of eggs, which a rude fellow broke, but the woman showed the eggs to the saint, who was passing at the time, and he lifted up his hand and blessed the eggs, “and they were made whole and sounde.” To this may be added another story: that when his body was translated, or removed, two rings of iron, fastened on his grave stone, came out as soon as they were touched, and left no mark of their place in the stone; but when the stone was taken up, and touched by the rings, they of themselves fastened to it again.

Infatuation—It is certainly very strange how attached the mass of mankind have ever been, and are still, to priests and lawyers. In despotic and enslaved countries, this devotion to priestcraft and litigation may be, in a great degree accounted for; but in a free and enlightened country, like America, where every man enjoys the right of thinking and acting for himself, it is rather unaccountable. It seems that with

all this boasted freedom of thought and action, by far the greatest portion of American citizens dare no more compromise their civil affairs amicably, without the interference of a lawyer, than they can venture to go to heaven without the aid and advice of a priest! Yet a little reflection would shew the people, that they can do extremely well without either; and that they have no more occasion of a revelation to guide them to the regions of bliss, than they have of acts of parliament and congress, to see their true interest and enjoy it; for while the sun of reason blazes and directs them to both ends, they have not the least necessity to borrow light from their neighbors.

What pretended Revelation is in the hand of the priest, common or positive law, is in that of the lawyer; the one being as much the work of man as the other, we find the same genius of mystery, cunning and confusion, prevail in both. Who can presume to read the Old and New Testament without the help of priests and the aid of comentators? and who can venture to study the laws of the land, or apply them, without the advice of counsel, and without the assistance of Coke upon Littleton? Now, if men were to reason as they ought, they would immediately renounce those two juggling professions, and dismiss the professors forever; by this, their peace of mind and temporal interests would be most wonderfully promoted. As religion is altogether an affair between God and man's mind, no third person has any right or business to interfere or arbitrate between them: God does not require a parson with a big wig, or a long faced methodist, with his slim hair, to put in his word, and volunteer as an umpire between him and his rational creatures; and as the transactions of this life are between man and man, there is not the least occasion of a preffessional lawyer to promote litigation and foment contentions, instead of allaying them; a few select and impartial men are, in every sense, adequate to the purpose. This system once adopted, would save a nation a vast deal of pain, trouble, anxiety and expense, and may be considered as a great prelude to happiness and general peace among mankind.

Natural Depravity.—If men were essentially wicked, and all born under the sway of a being as malignant as wretched, who, in revenge for his punishment, inspired him with all his rage, we should every morning hear of husbands being murdered by their wives, and fathers by their children, just as fowls are found killed by a pole-cat, who came in the night and sucked their blood.

If we suppose there are ten hundred millions of men upon the earth it is a great many; and this makes about five hundred millions of women, who sew and spin, feed their little ones, keep the house or hut clean, and backbite their neighbors a little. I do not see any great harm these poor simpletons do on earth. Of this number of inhabitants on the globe, there are at least two hundred millions of children, who certainly neither kill nor plunder, and about as many who, through age and sickness, are not capable of those crimes. Of these hundred millions, we may say, that ninety are continually taken up with prodigious labour, in forcing the earth to furnish them with food and raiment; now these have scarce time to perpetrate outrages.

In the remaining ten millions will be included idlers and jocund companions, who love peace and festivity; the men of talents, who are taken up with their several professions; magistrates and priests, whom it manifestly behoves to lead an irreproachable life, at least in appearance, so that the real wicked men are reduced to some few politicians, either secular or regular, who will always be for disturbing the world; and some thousands of vagrants who hire their services to these politicians. Now never is a million of these wild beasts employed at once, and among these I reckon highwaymen; so that at most, and in the most tempestuous times, there is not one man of a thousand who may be called wicked; and he is not so always.

Thus is wickedness on earth infinitely less than is talked of and believed. To be sure, there is still too much misfortune, distress and horrible crimes; but the pleasure of complaining and magnifying is such, that at the least scratch you cry out, the earth is deluged with blood. If you have been cheated, then the world is full of perjury. An atrabilari-ous mind, on having been wronged, sees the universe covered with damned souls: as a young rake seated at supper with his doxy, after the opera, does not dream that there are any distressed objects.

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